

FreeThought

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God is a myth, Immortality an illusion, Religion a gigantic fraud

Letters

Sir, FREETHOUGHT

Just a line to tell you that the article "Women and Rationalism" by Ms. Margaret Bhaty (FREETHOUGHT January 78) was indeed superb. Congratulations.

M. K. Rathish, Bangalore.

Sir,

I would like to give a suggestion. If you serialise the autobiographies of eminent Rationalists like Bertrand Russell, Ingersoll, H. N. Paranpype and Gora, it will be inspiring to the young readers.

T. R. Janardanan, Bombay.

MONARCHY'S OBSCURANTISM

Sir,

All human beings worth the name will be shocked at the news of the execution of Saudi Arabian Princess and her commoner husband before the public gaze (vide 'The Hindu' dt. 24-1-78).

It is incredible that such inhuman law—stoning to death for marrying a commoner—still exists even after centuries of civilisation. The only grievous fault they committed was that they loved each other defying the royal 'code'.

The world, alas, has not so far raised any protest against this murder of a democratic right. Has the human heart become bereft of nobler feelings?

A. Sivalingam, Tiruchy 11.

TEST FOR REASON

Sir,

On going through 'Test for reason no. 4' (FREETHOUGHT—Jan. 78), I was reminded of the following joke:

A court jester once displeased the king and he was ordered to be put to death. However, since the jester was the king's favourite,

he was given a choice as to the mode of death.

The king said "you can make any statement that you like. If you speak the truth you will be hanged; if you lie, you will be shot."

The court jester escaped scot free by saying 'I shall be shot.'

G. K. Menon, Ahmedabad.

HARASSED TEACHER

Sir,

I am a secondary school teacher working in Bharati Bidya Peetha, Ganjam District of Orissa. In almost all the schools of Orissa there is a prayer class before the classes begin. In my school also there is a prayer class where all the teachers and students have to assemble and recite prayers to Lord Jagannath or to other Pagan Gods. But being a staunch believer in positive atheism, I do not like to attend the prayer class and recite prayers to Lord Jagannath or other gods. Moreover, I do not like to take active part in the observance of the Saraswati Puja and the Ganesh Puja in the schools. So I have become the eyesore of the present Head Master of my school who is a staunch devotee of Sai Baba.

He compels me to take part in the religious rites of the school and has started harassing me in granting casual leave, drawing regular monthly salary, sanctioning increment etc.

Shall I be wrong to request you to solve a poor atheist from the clutches of the Pagans by communicating either with the Inspector of Schools, Ganjam Circle, Berhampur, Ganjam (Orissa) or with the Addl. Director of Public Instructions (schools), Orissa, Bhubaneswar to do the needful in this regard?

Pitabas Mohanty, Ganjam.

(The President of IRA has already written to the D.P.I. Bhubaneswar pointing out that the spirit of our constitution will be violated by such harassment. —Editor.)

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"The young mind is a torch to be lighted and not a vessel to be filled"

—A Ukranian proverb.

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Freethought

STORIES OF KINGS AND GODS

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In the past, there was an abundance of stories on kings, court intrigues, dynastic fights, forcible annexation of land, royal love and similar themes. Interest in such themes seems to wane though anachronistic monarchies minus or plus their powers persist in some parts of the world. It is time the last of them passed into the realm of bygone days.

Stories of gods and kings (like Ramayana) are used to indoctrinate youth, to sap their curiosity and energy and ensure their subordination. Our objection to the epic is not as a piece of artistic poetry. We strongly protest against the illegitimate use made of it (by deliberate distortions, falsehood and exaggeration) to aid reaction. We can also appreciate the flight of imagination of a poet or an author. But we cannot tolerate the subtle subjugation of the intellect of the people to fate and 'karma' to benefit the privileged few—through such 'epics'.

In India the march of history has not had its full impact. A criminal act of colossal waste of over rupees one crore has been perpetrated in the name of 'Yagna' with the active participation of reactionary ministers. A Cabinet Minister has been told in no uncertain terms that, in spite of his exalted position, he remains an 'untouchable'. Brahminism at its worst is at play.

Will it be the last flicker before it fades out? Or, are they deriving sustenance from abroad, for ends political? Will we have to slide back by several decades so that we deal a death blow to religious fanatics, Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Sikh alike who seem to have joined hands with a sinister motive?



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EDITOR:

C. A. SESHADRI

What great men say about Ramayana ?

"The Ramayana and the Mahabharata deal with the days of Indo-Aryans, their conquests and civil wars.

"I do not think I ever attached very much importance to these stories as factually true and I even criticised the magical and supernatural element in them. But they were imaginatively true enough for me just as were the stories from the ARABIAN NIGHTS or the PANCHATANTRA"

Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru
(in Discovery of India)

"My Rama is not that Rama of the Ramayana"

Mr. Mahandas Karamchand Gandhi.

"The Ram legend looks like a blend of three distinct stories without any historicity put together at different times (the Ayodhya intrigue and the banishment of Ram, the abduction of Sita and her recovery by Ram and episode of the monkey princes) and seems to have grown up in Eastern India, with an Austeric background but later it was re-edited as a national poem within the gorgeous frame work of the composite and highly complex Hindu civilization of 2000 years ago".

Late Dr. S. K. Chatterjee.

"The Ramayana in its present form seems to be the ancient legend of Rama's exploits retold by the poets who sang the praises of Samudra Gupta's triumphal progress in the footsteps of the Aryan hero".

H. P. Navell (In the 'History of Aryan Rule in India')

"It is possible to rewrite Ramayan..... after all it is not a book of history. It is a fiction
—Vinoba Bhave

Ramayana contains no allegory at all, but is based on Indian Mythology.

—Prof. Jacobi

WAS RAMA VIRTUOUS ?

Rama acquiesced himself in all the devices which space his father was making to crown him in the absence of Bharatha.

He mournfully revealed to his mother: It has been ordained that I have to lose the kingdom, forgo the princely comforts and the tasteful meat-dishes, and to go to the forest to eat vegetables and fruits" (Ayodhya Kanda, 20th Chapter).

In the forest he told Lakshmana. "As our father has grown old and infirm and as we have also come to the forest Bharatha with his wife will be ruling over Ayodhya joyfully without any opposition". (Ayodhya Kanda, 53rd Chapter) This brings to light his innate baseness, ambition to capture the throne and jealousy.

He called his father "a fool, an idiot". (Ayodhya Kanda, 53rd Chapter).

When Rama reached outskirts of Ayodhya he sent Hanuman to Bharatha to inform him. "I have come with a great force and also with Vibhishna and Sugriva. Then observe the impressions in his face and also the steps he hurries up to take soon on hearing this, because it is hard for anyone to relinquish the pleasures and the luxuries which Ayodhya abounds with" (Chapter 17, Uttara Kanda).

He made friends with Sugriva and Vibhishna knowing that they were knaves and that they approached him with the treacherous intention to kill their brothers and usurp the throne.

He stealthily killed Vali who had done him no harm, from behind for the sake of Vali's disloyal brother. This Rama who had not dared himself to fight face to face with Vali is hailed as a hero by the ignorant and greatly praised by the Brahmins by adding greater emphasis.

While killing Vali, Rama justified his action by explaining to him (Vali) that the rule of "Dharma need not be adhered to in the case of beasts" and yet Rama killed Vali on the ground that Vali had not conducted himself as a rational being ought to. Without making any attempt to get the explanation of Vali for charges levelled against Vali, Rama killed Vali relying wholly on the word of the selfish Sugriva.

ON WOMEN:

Rama insulted women, thus—"Women should not be trusted," and "Secrets should not be confided to wife" (Ayodhya Kanda, Chapter 100). (Contd. on page 80)



Statue is holier than a human being!

By Dr S. D. Sudarsanam.

In January '78 the statue of Dr. Sampurnanand was unveiled by the Defence Minister, Mr. Jagjivan Ram in Varanasi. Because he belongs to an 'untouchable' caste of Hindu religion it was taken that he polluted the statue. Immediately Suddhi or Purification ceremony was performed by Hindu priests with Ganga water. Suddhi ceremony is a bogus thing as it cannot change an atom of the original substance. It was not the statue that was polluted but the brains of the people who conducted the Suddhi ceremony. Their brains were polluted by traditional superstitions. Hence their brains should be washed with rationalism!

This Suddhi ceremony incident was brought to the notice of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. There was uproar and pandemonium in both the Sabhas for the insult heaped on the Defence Minister and indirectly on all 'Harijans.' Political parties are also involved in this affair. The Congress leaders say that some groups in Janata Party i.e., Janasangh and R. S. S. have got a hand in the Suddhi Ceremony. Janata Party leaders say that Congress people are behind this Suddhi Ceremony. All persons including the priests involved in this Suddhi Ceremony are liable for punishment under the Untouchability Act. It is the duty of the government to investigate the matter and punish the concerned persons under the Act.

Religions and castes are the main cause for many feuds and wars. When they are endangering the social unity and peace of the country why can't the government ban religions and castes in India? It is high time that these two malignant tumours (Religion and Caste) are removed from the body of Mother India to keep her in a healthy condition. ▷



WAS RAMA
BORN TO
DASARATHA?

(Please see page 74)

BUDDHIST RAMAYANA

Prof. SURENDRA AJNAT

According to the Dasharath Jatak, the Buddhist Ramayana, King Dasharath who ruled in Varanasi had three offsprings from his first major queen: two sons (Ram Pandit and Lakshman) and one daughter (Sita Devi). Another queen was made the major queen on the death of the first one. One son (Bharata Kumar) was born to the new queen. Dasharatha promised a boon to the queen on this occasion. When Bharata was seven years' old, the queen asked Dasharatha to declare him his heir. Dasharatha declined to oblige. But when the queen started pressing her point every day, Dasharatha (afraid of intrigues), called his elder sons and advised them to live in a jungle and to return on his death to rule the kingdom. Then Dasharatha

asked astrologers when he would die. They told him that he would die twelve years afterwards. Now Dasharatha told his sons, "Rule the kingdom after twelve years." Sita too got her father's permission to accompany them. All the three now started for the jungle. Many others wanted to accompany them but they were turned back by them (the three). The three reached the Himalayas and lived there in an Ashram.

Dasaratha's death

After nine years, Dasharatha dies of sorrow.* The queen fails to get her son Bharata installed on the throne as the ministers and Bharata himself oppose her. Then Bharata gathers his forces and takes them to Ram. He wants to induce Ram to return to the Kingdom. Leaving the forces in the neighbourhood, Bharata in company of chosen ministers approaches Ram in the Ashram. Ram is alone at that time. Bharata narrates how his father died and starts weeping. Ram Pandit neither feels sorrow nor weeps.

In the evening Lakshmana and Sita, too, came back to the Ashram. Hearing the news

* 1. Where were the calculations of the astrologers who cheat the people in a pious way by putting distorted pictures of the future!

Longevity of Astronomical Proportions

The Ramayana mentions that people in those days had great longevity. They lived thousands of years. Rama is said to have reigned for 11,000 years. Dasaratha is represented to have reigned 60,000 years. In the Uttara Kanda there is a story of a Brahmin's son who was merely 5,000 years old and had not yet attained boyhood.

Hanuman who remained more than 11,000 years with Rama, did not die even in the transitory period which followed the Treta yuga and preceded the Dwapara yuga. He met Bheema Sen in Dwapara yuga. (He exhibited his strength to the latter when the latter failed to lift his tail.)

Keeping all these facts in view, the age of Hanuman was $10,000 + 11,000 + 100 = 21,100$ years at least, though due to lack of relevant material the years intervening the suicide of Ram and the beginning of Dwapara yuga is omitted. Nor do we know how many years of Dwapara yuga elapsed by the time he met Bheem Sen. Those years too, have been omitted while calculating the age of Hanuman.

of their father's death, they feel great sorrow. Ram Pandit gives them a religious discourse on the inevitable death of everything. Hearing this discourse, everyone becomes free from sorrow.

Ram declines Bharata's invitation to come back and rule by saying : "I was asked by my father to rule the kingdom after twelve years. If I return now, I will be disobeying him. I will come after three years".

Clapping Sandals

When Bharata too declines to rule, Ram gives him his grass-sandals, saying : "These will rule till I come back."

Bharata, Lakshmana and Sita, accompanied by other men, return to the kingdom, with the grass-sandals. Ministers rule with the help of these sandals. Whenever any injustice is done, the sandals strike each other. They keep calm, if justice is administered correctly.

Brother marries sister

After three years, Ram Pandit returns and marries his sister Sita. After ruling for over sixteen thousand years in an ideal religious way, Ram goes to heaven.

AMOROUS RAMA

In Hemachandra's Jain Ramayan, Ram has four wives. In Valmiki, Ram has only Sita as his wife, but enjoys many other women. Valmiki describes a scene in the pleasure gardens of Ayodhya wherein he says Ram, who knew how to please everyone, indulged in amorous acts with several women.

Is Ramayana one Story ?

Commenting on the Ram legend, Late Dr. S. K. Chatterjee said :

"The Ram legend looks like a blend of three distinct stories without any historicity put together at different times. The Ayodhya intrigue and the banishment of Ram ; the abduction of Sita and her recovery by Ram ; and episode of the monkey princes all seem to have grown up in Eastern India, with an Austrie background but later it was re-edited as a national poem within the gorgeous framework of the composite and highly complex Hindu civilization of 2,000 years ago "

Our Oldest Aircraft

We read in the Ramayana of Pushpaka Vimana, wherein there were big palaces made of precious stones, gold and silver. It used to fly in accordance with the vocal command as if it were a conscious being.

JAIN RAMAYANA

Prof. SURENDRA AJNAT

Uttar Puran is another early version of Ramayana. It is the Jain Ramayana. According to it Darsharatha, King of Banares has four sons: Ram from his wife Sobala, Lakshmana from Kaikeyi and later on when Dasharatha shifts his capital from Banares to Saketpur (Ayodhya), Bharata and Shatrughen are born from another queen whose name is not given. Dashanan (Ravan), the son of Pulastya of the Vinami Vidyadhar clan, one day sees Manimati, the daughter of Amritnag, doing penance and being bitten by her beauty, tries to disturb her 'tapas'. She forecasts: 'I will take birth as your daughter and kill you.' After her death, she comes in the womb of Mandodari (the wife of Ravan). On her birth, the astrologers tell Ravan that she will cause his destruction.

Ravan getting afraid, orders Marich to abandon the child-girl in some wild place. Marich puts the child-girl in a box and buries it in the kingdom of Mithila. The box is unearthed by a plough and is taken to king Janak. Janak opens the box and finds a girl in it whom he names Sita* and brings her up as his daughter. Rama weds 8 maidens. After a long time, Janaka invites Ram and Lakshmana to defend a 'Yajna'. At the end of this Yajna, Ram weds Sita and seven other maidens, and Lakshmana weds sixteen maidens including Prithividevi. Both Ram and Lakshmana seek and get their father's permission to live in Banares.

Narad describes Sita's great beauty to Ravana who decides to abduct her. Shoorpa Nakh is sent to test Sita's mind. When Ram and Sita are on a pleasure trip to Chitrakoota near Banares, Marich appears as a golden deer and leads Ram far away. Meanwhile, Ravana in the garb of Ram, presents himself before Sita and tells her that he has ordered the golden deer to be taken to the palace, and asks her to

*. Sita is a Sanskrit word. Its literal meaning is a furrow made by a plough

Why Vindhya Grew no Further

There is a gossip wherein it is stated that the great Vindhya mountain grew so tall and high that it threatened to stop the very progress of the sun. Saint Agastya on being supplicated by the Rishis promised to stop the growth of the presumptuous mountain and thus to prevent the happening of such a calamity. He presented himself before the mountain. The (audacious?) mountain in reverence fell prostrate before him.

Agastya asked 'him' to remain in that position till he returned. But he did not return and the mountain lies prostrate awaiting the return of the great (1) sage.

MAN EATER

About a Rakshasa (demon) character - namely Kumba Karna the epic writes that when he was even an infant, he swallowed thousands of people. The distressed people complained against him to Indra!

tep in the 'Palki'. This Palki is in fact, the Pushpaka Vimana which flies Sita to Lanka. Ravan does not touch Sita as that would mean an end to his sky-flying art.

Lakshmana goes to hell

Dasaratha, in a dream, comes to know that Sita has been abducted by Ravan. Dasaratha sends this information to Ram. Meanwhile, Sugriva and Hanuman come to seek help against Bali

Hanuman goes to Lanka and returns after giving hope to Sita (no mention is made of the burning of Lanka). After this Bali is killed by Lakshmana and Sugriva gets his kingdom. Now, the combined forces of Ram and the monkey-kingdom march towards Lanka. In the end of the detailed description of the war, Lakshmana cuts off Ravana's head by a chakra. After this, Lakshmana conquers all the directions, becomes Ardh-Chakravarti, and returns to Ayodhya. Lakshman has 16,000 queens and Ram has 8000 queens. Sita gives birth to eight sons (no mention is made of Sita Banvas episode). Lakshman dies of an incurable disease, and goes to hell due to his killing of Ravan. Ram makes Prithivisundar, son of Lakshmana, the king, and Ajitanjay, son of Sita, the heir to Prithivisundar. Then Rama is initiated into a religious order and gets Moksha. Sita too, with many other queens gets initiated. In Hemchandra's Jain Ramayan, Ram has four wives.

Asvametha Yaga and how Rama was conceived :

Kausalya, one of the wives of Dasaratha at one stroke mowed down the neck of the horse consecrated for the Yagna and lay a whole night embracing the carcass (Balakanda 14th Chap.) At day-dawn Dasaratha made a present rather as fees for the performance of the Yagna, his first wife, Kausalya along with his other two wives, Sumitra and Kaikeyi to three priests. These priests having done full justice to their animal passion delivered the ladies back to the king who made no bones about it. (Balakanda 14th Chap.) It was after this that the ladies became pregnant. Manmathanath Dattar. In his English translation, writes that three priests, named Hotha, Advaryu and Yukdha were pawned upon to enjoy these women. It was by the priests that the royal wives conceived. According to Valmiki Dasaratha had three hundred and fifty wives. From this it is apparent that Dasaratha was a decrepit old man and was a lascivious mass of flesh. It is not uncommon that an old man weak and infirm should have mere craziness for women without the required virility to produce children and should beguile his time in the company of women.

Thousands of life for a son:

In Balakandam, the first Chapter of Ramayana, it is said that Dasaratha, the king of Ayodhi, was making preparations to perform a sacrifice for be getting a son. In that sacrifice many creatures like sheep, cattle, horses, birds and snakes - generally an creatures viviparous and oviparous, were kept ready to be sacrificed. Horrible that so many lives should be slaughtered for the benefit of an individual expecting fatherhood!

Story of a Bad Man who Shook the Heavens

By Mukund

(Contd. from February Issue)

Chitrugupta's Woes

The whole problem arose because of Chitrugupta. Obviously he was taken to task. But he argued his case. He said, "You have never tried to understand my problems. First of all, there is a phenomenal expansion in the work load. For a single soul, I have to deal with all his previous births, present life, account of karma in each, detailment in heaven and hell, and appointment to the next birth. Nobody can imagine how much co-ordination is required to be made. I do not have adequate staff, nor sufficient responsible officers.

Secondly, the rules are not clear. What is sinful and what is not, changes from time to time. Beef-eating was no sin; then it became a serious sin now again doubts are raised. I can give you innumerable examples like this. It makes accounting very difficult, rather impossible.

Thirdly, is the problem of those who have converted themselves to other religions. No action can be taken against them. Their files are simply pending. On the other hand,

are those who have switched on to Hinduism from other religions. I cannot get their previous files. How can their accounts be perfect?

Fourthly, let me state my main problem very boldly. Big gods are always interfering in my office on behalf of their own devotees. Many rogues are escaping punishment because of that. Well, I did make some mistake regarding the bad man, but let me tell you that if this very man were a devotee of some influential God, he would have easily obtained heaven."

Gods' problems

At this, Chitrugupta was left alone and the topic was changed. Some said that it was now the duty of Krishna to take a new birth and restore order. "Why did he give that promise? Now let him do something," they retorted. Another suggestion came that each god should fix up his/her own followers, and territorial deities should set their own areas right. For example, they quoted that Durga should improve Bengal, Tirupati Andhra, Vithoba Maharashtra and so on. But this led to a lot of mud throwing on each other, as jurisdictions were not clear. Some proposed that more powers should be given to the godmen. Since these godmen work at grass root level they should be more effective, was the idea. But it was felt that enough powers are already with them. As no new idea was coming up, Narada came with one. He said.

ORIGIN OF EARTH

The Ramayana says that God Brahma took the shape of a boar (Varaha) and then raised up the earth. Then he created this diversified creation with the help of his blessed son.

" We gods have been out-maneuvred by a single man. That means he knows all the loop-holes in the system. Why not we consult that man. It would be of use to us. Let him frankly tell the secret of his success ". The idea was approved and the man was called. He spoke thus :

Bad man unfolds

" My secret was simple. I was an expert manipulator. I could get all sorts of irregular things done for the big men and obviously not without a price. Men like me are always in demand, especially in a religious country where big men want to keep their own images as pious, and yet wish to get all sorts of undue benefits. It is impossible without men like me. True, that some of them never take bribes or give bribes, but their affairs are managed by persons like me, and they never try to know how ".

" But how could you do that ? "

" You see. I perfected manipulation into a new economics and human relationship into a commercial art. My calculations were perfect. It was a business, so to say."

" Did you not face any dangers ? "

" If you study the weaknesses of others and exploit them intelligently, the danger is reduced to the minimum. Moreover, I was always superficial in relationships and never emotionally involved in anything."

" That was all right in the earth. But how could you succeed after death ? "

Men get Gods they Deserve

" I could guess your affairs from those of your devotees. If men get the kind of government they deserve, they would get gods also accordingly. I had seen gods encouraging flattery, bribing, favouritism, short-cut and exploitation. That enabled me to form my *modus operandi* for heaven."

The man was allowed to go, but he had almost silenced every body. The discussions continued but without force. But then, some gods who are no more worshipped, expressed a radical thought. They suggested that it was time that gods should withdraw their empire over mankind and give the human beings a self-Government. They argued that ultimately it is man who will have to take the entire responsibility of human affairs on himself and ensure that the right prevails and wrong is punished at the right level and in right time.

Gods exist Because. . .

Nobody liked the idea but they did listen to it. In the end they decided, " We are there because the men want us to be there and we will continue to be there as long as men refuse to stand on their own legs."

(Concluded)

THE THEORY OF YUGAS

In the light of the fact that man (including primitive man) has existed on this planet only for 5,00,000 years the following account of Yugas may be examined;

According to tradition the Ramayana is the production of Treta yuga — 2nd in the chronology and the Mahabharata is the production of Dvapara yuga — 3rd in chronology. The duration of these yugas was 1,29,600 and 8,64,000 years respectively.

THE 'TRUE' RAMAYANA

BY. MR. BHAGWAN SINGH

The 'original' Ramayana dealt with a struggle for power between Rama and Bharatha and had little concern for the supernatural, super human and the legends, according to a paper presented at the Congress of Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences, in Chandigarh in 1975.

Distortion by Brahmins

Mr. Bhagwan Singh, contended that Ramayana was developed and enlarged 'beyond recognition' by Brahmin poets who wanted to use the epic to establish their social authority. The original Ramayana appeared to have been based on a concrete historical reality, he said.

Mr. Singh argued the great qualities ascribed to Dasaratha, had been invented to dislodge a serious charge.

"There is some circumstantial evidence to show that at least Rama was begotten by Dasaratha earlier than he wedded Kaikeyi". The king had pledged the State to Kaikeyi's would-be son-a fact which would have been redundant had there been no son of the king existing then.

To deprive Rama of his legal rights to the throne, Kaikeyi cleverly managed the ouster of Kausalya.

Group Rivalry : The fact that Satrughaa was as loyal to Bharata as Lakshmana was to Rama, showed group rivalry at the court. Rama and Lakshmana did not receive their education from the royal priest Vasista. They were sent to the remote ashram of sage Visvamisra for the purpose. Bharata and Satrughaa received education from Vasista.

Mr Singh noted that Visvamisra and Vasista had been hostile to each other and the bone of contention between them had been the office of the priest. There appears to have been some collusion between Kaikeyi and Vasista, as it was on the sage's plea that Dasaratha agreed to send Rama and Lakshmana with Visvamisra.

It was important to note that Visvamisra had taken the initiative to arrange Rama's marriage without prior intimation either to Dasaratha or Vasista "perhaps with a view that it would have a great bearing on the choice of the heir to the throne of Ayodhya".

Deep-Rooted Conspiracy

Mr Singh held that developments leading to Dasaratha's making up his mind to coronate Rama reflected a "deep-rooted" conspiracy. Sensing the trouble that might be created by Kaikeyi in the choice of the Heir, Dasaratha sent Bharata and Satrughaa to the maternal uncle Yuchajit, the king of Kekaya.

Derivation of Hanuman

The name of Hanuman being Sanskrit, the character is probably not borrowed from the aborigines. As Hanumat is the present day tutelary deity of village settlements all over India, Prof. Jacobi's surmise that he must have been connected with agriculture and may have been a genius of the monsoon has some probability.

While Bharata was away in Kekaya, Dasaratha announced his decision to coronate Rama the very next day. All preparations were made secretly in utter haste. He stated clearly that it had to be solemnised before Bharata returned.

Dasaratha felt uncertain about his own life and was having nightmares and ill-omens of all sorts.

Kausalya, while receiving Rama after getting the news of his coronation, blessed him with the words, "Long live my son. Thine rivals have been demolished". She said to Rama that his coronation would be a subject of rejoicing for her dependants and those of Sumitra, but significantly enough, no mention of Kaikeyi and her dependants was made.

Was Dasaratha's death natural?

Kaikeyi, however, not only got the decision reversed in her son's favour, but also compelled Dasaratha and Rama to submit to her absolute terms. Commitments or no commitments at the time of his marriage, Dasaratha was not obliged to entertain Kaikeyi's demand for the banishment of Rama, unless threatened by some apparent dire consequences.

Dasaratha survived the first shock of the reversal of his decision and the overwhelming

moment of Rama's departure and still he died shortly afterwards. "Was it, therefore, a natural death?" Mr. Singh asked.

Rama, after his banishment, visits several places, but only temporarily, apparently because he apprehends some attempt on his life and honour.

INCONSISTENT: Referring to the Bharata-Rama meeting, Mr. Bhagwan Singh noted that Bharata proceeded to meet Rama with "a threatening army" which was inconsistent with a noble mission. The very presence of an army had its own logic. Bharata's offer to Rama must, therefore, be treated as a diplomatic move.

Sita's abduction by Ravana in the absence of Rama and Lakshmana did not behove of a mighty king, and at its best indicated that Ravana was a miscreant tribal chief. He appeared to have been induced by some agency to do the job. "This agency, we suspect, was Kaikeyi".

His qualities of leadership, his uninhibited association with the tribals, his knowledge of advanced weaponry and his dexterity at shooting made Rama a highly venerable figure. He easily won active support of numerous tribes, the bear, monkey and vulture clans among them.

Search for the Historical Rama

The Surya-Vamsa, Rama's family, were worshippers of Surya, while the Pandavas and Kauravas were worshippers of Chandra. Surya was the chief deity of the Aryans in Babylonia in the second millennium before Christ. So we may assume that the Aryan king of the Metanni, Durbratta, who ruled in Babylon at that time, was one of the Surya-Vamsa. It is not therefore surprising to find it recorded in the Ramayana that Dasaratha of the royal house of Ayodhya, also had Surya as his Ishta-devata.

With their help, Rama was able to trace the hide-out of Ravana, and the terror associated with his name, his secretive nature, his waterbound hide-out, all indicated that he might have been a notorious pirate.

Ravana having been defeated, Sita recovered, Rama returned to Ayodhya with full military preparations along with his commanders and took Bharata unawares.

Before entering the kingdom, he sent his envoy, Hanuman, to settle things smoothly

through dialogue. Bharata understood the gravity of the situation and submitted unconditionally. Arrangements for Rama's coronation were made by his great ally, Sugriva and his aides, and not by Bharata.

"Seen from this angle", Mr. Bhagwan Singh said, "there is nothing unreal, unnatural or impossible in the story. On the contrary, it is very much realistic and real".

▷



Ravana the Advocate of Prohibition and Ahimsa

When and where were 'Yagnas' (sacrifices) done? In the subtle upper worlds or in this physical world? Where did the Devas reside? Why should they come to this physical world to perform the sacrifices? Is killing the poor animals by tortuous means and gulping the flesh along with intoxicants and uttering mantras, the definition of a sacrifice? Is it unjust to prevent such cruelty being done to the dumb creatures? In these days, cruelty to animals and indulging in intoxicating drink are considered by the people as well as the Government as crimes punishable with fine and imprisonment. Would it not have been just and fair in the days of "Ravana" also to prevent these crimes? Ravana was a devotee of Siva and as would befit a devotee would it not have been his (Ravana's) duty to enjoin by law and order that his State should be dry and that Yagnas which involved cruelty to animals should not be performed.

Prohibition in Ram Rajya!

In an article captioned "Drinks in Ramayana" published in the Caravan, Delhi dt. 15-8-1954, Dr. S. N. Vyas had listed out 8 different liquors along with the processes adopted. This includes 'Varuni', the one that will make any one stagger immediately it was drunk.

DID RAVANA SEDUCE SITA?



Ravana said, "Ah! Sita, our company is chanced by the divine will. This is agreeable to the Rishis." (Aranya Kanda, Chapter 58.)

Sita replied, "You are free to embrace this body of mine as you will. I need not protect it. I should not be smirched that I have blundered." (Aranya Kanda, Chapter 59). It may be inferred here that Sita did not give her consent to Ravana to cohabit her.

Rama said, "Sita! How could Ravana have left you without being seduced?" To this charge by Rama, Sita gave the following reply which confirms the above inference:

Sita said, "True! But what could I do? I am only a weaker sex. My body was in his possession. I did not do anything wrong willingly. However mentally I was with you. It was only a divine will." She said only so much. But she did not assert herself that "Ravana has not seduced me" (Uttara Kanda, Chapter 118).

RAVANA DID NOT FORCE SITA:

"Ravana most respectfully with bowed head and without touching her person made

Sita follow him." This means "Ravana has not used any violence and Sita of her own accord ran after him willingly." Sita ought to have followed Ravana voluntarily. Ravana could not have touched Sita when she was unwilling. Why? Because, it was ordained by a curse that his head would burst into pieces if Ravana touched any woman without her consent. There was also Brahma's curse that Ravana's body would be burnt if he dared touch any lady who was not amenable to him. Therefore, Ravana would not and could not touch any woman without her consent.

WAS SITA IN LOVE WITH RAVANA?

Darmaha, the chief of Rama's spies, came to Rama and acquainted him with the news that the reclamation of Sita from Ravana (by Rama) and accepting her as his wife was a subject of ridicule and scandal among the citizens. As he heard this Rama flared up. The disgrace and sorrow he felt within himself was reflected on his face. He sighed and went out with his sister Kukulavathy to Sita's apartment. She was found sleeping pressing to her breast the hand-fan in which Ravana's picture was drawn. (This is found

Is Ramayana more ancient than Mahabharata?

Late Mr C. V. Valdia after a careful examination of both the epics concludes: It must be stated here that the Mahabharata as it exists today is no doubt more ancient than the Ramayana as it is today.

The language of the Mahabharata is very near to the language of the Atharva veda. There are not only innumerable vedic words and phrases found in it but also vedic meters. The plot structure of this epic is tame and crude, whereas in the Ramayana, the language is very near to the classical Sanskrit used by Kalidas etc., and the plot structure is so attractive and fine that the later writers on Sanskrit poetics called it the Adi Maha Kavya, i.e. the first model epic.

(Contd from previous page)

in pages 199, 280 of the book entitled "Bengali Ramayana," written by Mrs. Chandravathi.)

A close study of the events reveals that by the time Rama detected Sita's pregnancy, the approximate time during which her pregnancy could have developed should be less than a month shortly after Rama's return to Ayodhya on reclaiming Sita from Ravana.

Sita was caught red handed by Rama that she had drawn the picture of Ravana. ('Notes on Ramayana' by Mr. C. R. Srinivasa Iyengar).

Rama caused his wife Sita who was pregnant to be left alone in the forest. This was a dreadful cruelty and showed how Rama was convinced,

As regards Sita she was not pure because of her illicit intimacy with Ravana. If Rama's action is accepted as justifiable, it should also be accepted by all that Sita's pregnancy must have been caused by Ravana.

▷

Not only this, there are some other irrefutable arguments in favour of this conclusion.

The Mahabharata does not refer to the zodiacal signs. These were evidently introduced by or borrowed from the Greek, about 200 B.C. The reference to these in the Ramayana is found in unequivocal terms.

In the Mahabharata we find clear reference to Polyandry while in the Ramayana there was the prevalence of the practice of polygamy. The sociologists tell us that polyandry preceded Polygamy.

The Ramayana has copied from the Mahabharata a whole chapter word for word. Whereas that chapter fits in properly with the context in the Mahabharata, it is an intolerable interpolation in the Ramayana. The 100th canto in the Ayodhya Kanda is the same as chapter 5 of the Sabhaparva. ▷

Character of Sita

In the whole story of Ramayana there is scarcely a word of praise about Sita.

Her birth is doubtful and questionable (Ayodhya Kanda—Chapter 66). She was older than Rama. She says, "I was found out from the dust and by that fact my parentage not being known, none did come forward to woo me for many days even after I attained maturity."

Rationalism In Ramayana

"It was God's will that I was not able to get the throne", thus Rama was sighing. Seeing this, Lakshmana criticised Rama that "only cowards and fools would talk about God's will."

Was the attempt to crown Rama Proper?

The old king openly opined to Rama that the departure of Bharatha (son of Kaikeyi) to his uncle's house was an auspicious indication for the celebration of his (Rama's) coronation (Ayodhya kanda, 4th Chap.) Dasaratha kept Bharatha in his grand-father's house for ten years solely with the sinister object of dispossessing him of his right to the country.

There was no exigency calling for his stay at his grand-father's house for ten long years continuously without turning up to Ayodhya. Valmiki putting it in the character of Mandarai says in the 7th and 8th Chapters "Dasaratha, with a pre-planned motive to make Rama the king, sent away Bharatha to his uncle's house. The immediate presence of Bharatha in the capital city would enable him to win the sympathy of the citizens and his exile (in his uncle's house) would make him lose contact with the people.

The Ministers, Vasshta and other Gurus and also Rama had known fully well that Bharatha was the heir to the throne and yet they were insidious enough to give their assent to enthroning Rama.

All his efforts having proved ineffectual he ordered Sumadra to despatch along with Rama all the money in the treasury, the grains in the granary, all the subjects including the merchants and barlets to the forest (Ayodhya Kanda, 35th Chapter).

Kaikeyi having objected to this also, Dasaratha twisted the issue by arguing "You wanted only the country and not all that it contained" (Ayodhya Kanda, 36th Chap.)

Dasaratha forgot the word which he had given her at her marriage that he would give his kingdom to the son that would be born through her.

His declaration in the presence of his subjects of handing over the kingdom to his son Rama is a breach of the promise made to Kaikeyi and her father. >

WHAT IS ITIHASA

In ancient Sanskrit literature we find very meagre shade of what we call history yet orthodox scholars try to maintain that ancient Indians had a very clear sense of history. In support of their claim they quote from old scriptures and say that Itihasa (History) had an important place in those days of hoary past. The word Itihasa means—Iti + Iha + Aas i.e. It was so.

Prof Apte writes the meaning of word Itihasa—history—legendary or traditional.

It is quite clear that Itihasa was not pure history for the ancient Indians. It included mythology, old stories, Dharma shashtra and discourses on Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha.

The purpose of history for them was not the study of man through ages.

For them the sole purpose of history was to explain the Vedas.

Though, in some cases, the writers were living when the events took place, they did not go deep into them and did not try to get valid data and solely relied on what they heard to be. That is why the term Itihasa came into being.

Ramayana by an American (Obel Menon)

"The American interpretation makes Rama something in the nature of a Chicago gangster and SITA a light minded girl rather Ravana" See "News and views from the volume XIII. No. 263 page 2.

Rama something in the nature of a Chicago gangster and SITA a light minded girl rather Ravana" dated November 20th, 1954.

'Wisdom' of Ancient India

The following advertisement appeared in
The Times of India, dated 10th Jan. 1978

"This world is nothing but a Divine play of the Lord. All created forms are instruments of play in the Hands of the Antaryamin, the unseen Maker.

"Ours is to play the game of life 'Playfully.' We should never take this manifest world seriously. After all, this life is a dream being 'concretised' by the illusive power of Maya. We should take 'Sukhas' and 'Dukhas' merely as passing shows in a dream.

"When we take a serious view of the happenings and incidents of our daily lives and become consequently morose and unhappy, we are no more willing instruments in the Hands of the Lord. We mar His happiness and joy. We spoil His 'Maaj' (thrill) which He derives from His Divine play. We earn His displeasure.

"Therefore, O children of Immortality, play the game of life playfully, cheerfully whatever the external adjustment of life and earn the choicest grace and blessings of the Lord."

Here are the comments. If we are instruments of His play, are we not His victims? How then can our happiness or sorrow affect the manipulator, 'Antaryamin', the unseen Maker?

What strange logic is this that would invert truth by 'concretising' unreality, and debunking reality? And to achieve this mental somersault are we to believe that all *dukh* and *sukh* are as passing shows in a dream, for fear that if we show we care too much and weep we may mar His joy?

A perverse Being indeed who derive delight from the creatures he torments! Possibly the cyclone tragedy is yet another sample of this Lord's unpredictable playfulness—a sample of that same freakish humour which led him to create the world in the first place, and then people it with poor benighted creatures who must all try hard to keep him happy by smiling.

Therefore, O children of immortality, play the game of life playfully, cheerfully! The strong winds, furious floods, the havoc and the destruction were all stirred up in a single night's frolic by this riotous fun-loving Creator, this unseen Maker of Sick Jokes. Let us laugh over the Andhra cyclone and the 50,000 recent dead. Let us not spoil His fun!

Ms. M. R. BHATTY.

Rama's Friends

Sugriva who betrayed his brother became a slave to Rama only to kill his brother. The second was Angadha who was a man with no sense with honour and who became friendly with Rama though the later killed his father. The third was Vibhishna who was actuated by avariciousness to become the king of Lanka by causing the death of his brother. Vibhishna did not object to Rama stepping into Ravana's forest unjustly and hunting the animals therein. His blood did not boil when his sister and other women related to him were maimed and dishonoured by cutting their noses, ears, breast and hair.

KAMBA RAMAYANA AND BRAHMIN DOMINATION

S.L. Bharati, M.A., B.L.

The D.M.K. under Arignar Anna's leadership made demonstrations by burning Kamba Ramayana. Some Tamil Scholars criticised their act on the ground of the commendable literary merits of the Epic poem. But they failed to meet squarely their condemnation of the irrational social hierarchy it sought to support and perpetuate. A free rendering of the advice given to Rama on the eve of his proposed crowning by Sage Vasishtha as desired by Dasaratha is given below by way of illustration :

"Ayodhya Kandam : Mantharai Sool
chipadalam"

After ascertaining from the astrologers that the following day will be most auspicious for Rama to be crowned (their calculations of

course failed) Dasaratha sent for Sage Vasishtha and after duly worshipping him Dasaratha requested him to do the needful quickly and give Rama lasting advice. Vasishtha proceeded to do accordingly and when Rama appeared, he was informed that he was to be crowned, King next day. Vasishtha then said to him:—
"I will tell you one thing - that will ensure you enduring benefit. Hear it well and strictly follow. The Brahmins are greater than the Trinity, Vishnu, Siva and Brahma, the five senses and truth - so cherish them in your heart, son ; Think of the Devas - those who suffered and those who rose after their suffering and thereby know the power of the Brahmins' curse and their grace has no limits. (Compare kural verse 25 for the simile of the chief of Devas - Indra) The Brahmins being such, lay your head low at their feet; praise and worship them. If Fate itself will stand and wait for their commands to bestow prosperity or bring destruction, then what else could equal the virtue of propitiating them". No wonder from parasurama to Morarji (including Indira Gandhi) the 'dynamic' Brahmins bless or curse the people



Bengali Ramayana

In the Bengali book "Lankavathara Sutra", it is written that Ravana was a Dravidian King who embraced Buddhism and he was a philosopher of the type of Plato and Aristotle. Because it was spoken so high of Ravana in the Buddhist Literature, the Brahmins and pandits characterised Ravana in such vile terms in the Ramayana written by them. Keerthavasa in his works on Ramayana says that Ravana ruled the land with love and grace.

Ravana while dying in the battle fell called Rama to his side and whispered into his ears about the doctrine of kindness and that the battle he (Rama) had fought was only through deceit and fraud. Thus we find in the Keerthavasa Ramayana that Ravana preached truthfulness and uprightness.

Facts behind Dr. Narasimhaiah's resignation

Dr. H. Narasimhaiah, the former Vice-Chancellor of Bangalore University who was heading the Committee appointed to investigate miracles resigned his post in August 77. People have been intrigued as he was pitted against Sai Baba.

Our enquiries show that Sai Baba had financed a section of the students to create trouble in the University. The students resorted to stone throwing. The R.S.S., the organisation of Hindu fanatics has been conspicuous in the Basavangudi area of Dr. Narasimhaiah. They have incited their volunteers to foment trouble. The Vokkaliga Community were dead against the former Vice-Chancellor. To top it all the Janata Government appointed Mr. Sriman Narayanan to take over from Mr. Uma Shankar Dikshit as Governor. Mr. Narayanan assumed office on 1st August 1977. One of his 'official' visits was to the Sai Baba on 1st August 1977. That act almost served a notice

on the Vice-Chancellor. Having been a storm petrel in the university, Dr. Narasimhaiah knew that it would be impossible to be associated with a Chancellor of Mr. Narayanan kind. Though he had another 16 months to go, he sent in his resignation on 7th August 1977.

Mr. Narayanan lost no time in accepting the resignation and appointing another Sai Baba devotee, Mr. T. N. Jayaraman I.A.S. In the foot steps of the Chancellor, the new Vice-Chancellor paid his respects to the god-man.

Thus an illustrious career has been short circuited by religious fanatics and the hoodlums of a god man. The loss of Bangalore University is the gain of the public at large. With redoubled vigour, he is presiding over the inauguration of the Bangalore Science Forum at the National College Buildings, Bangalore-4. He is determined to launch a campaign against miracles and superstitions. Rationalists will be pleased to note that he will be using our forum as well during the summer. Interested units may contact I.R.A.'s Secretary. D

Was not Ravana Justified in Abducting Sita ?

Being unable to put up with the provocation on account of the insult, cruelty and brutality done to his sister, Ravana carried away Sita to Lanka as a retaliatory measure and not out of love towards Sita, nor with any motive to seduce another man's wife.

Ravana hated Devas and Rishis. Why? They in the name of sacrifice to the sacred fire, committed the most heinous crime of killing the poor dumb animals in a tortuous manner.

Even at the gravest provocation, even in a fit of ungovernable rage, and even at the most irrepressible incitement, Ravana, said Valmiki, had not even thought of mutilating the ears, the breast and the nose of Sita as a revenge for what had been done to Soorpanakai by Rama and Lakshmana.

Auspicious day for Banishment

Guru Vasishtha behaved no better than an ordinary priest.

The day he fixed (as auspicious) for the coronation of Rama ultimately turned out to be the day for his banishment to the forest.

WAS RAMA VIRTUOUS ?
(Contd. from page 69)

WAR MONGER :

Determined to drag the Rakshasas into a war, Rama entered Ravana's territory despite the protest of Sita (Aranya Kanda, Chapter 9 and 10).

CASTEISM :

Sambuka was slain (by Rama) because he was making penance which was forbidden to him by Vedas as he was a "Sudra" (Uttara Kanda, Chapter 76).

MERCILESS AGAINST 'SUDRAS' :

Looking at his hand, Rama said the Sanskrit slogan— "O Right hand, you kill this Asche Sudra unhesitatingly as killing this Sudra is the only way to get back the life of the deccated Brahmin boy. Are you not

one of the limbs of Rama ? " (Valmiki Ramayana).

HERO WHO BROKE THE BROKEN BOW!

The bow that was broken by Rama was Siva's. This bow was already a broken one. Refer Abidhana Chintamani pages 157, 331, 571, 663, 894, 1151, 1173 and 1494.

This is supported by various Ramayanas and Parasuram. Look at his age when he broke the bow. When Rama broke this bow, according to his mother, he was 5 years old; according to his father, he was about 10. According to his wife (Sita) his age was 12. Whatever it might be that it was already a broken bow is true according to the story.

Editorial Note:

We record our gratitude to the following Authors and their books for enabling us to present most of the facts and comments found in this issue.

1. 'THE RAMAYANA' (A True Reading) by Periyar E.V.R. — published by Periyar Self Respect Propaganda Institute Publication Tichy-17.

2. 'HINDU EPICS'—Historic or Imaginary? by Prof. Surindera Ajnat - published by Bhram Patrika publications, Jullundur-3, Punjab.

Both the books are available at I.R.A. for sale at Re 1 and Rs 3/- respectively.

CORRECTION

Mr Yash Y. Lokhandwala, author of the article 'ATHEISM' published in page 59 of our February issue was erroneously described as President, Bombay Rationalist Association. Mr. Yash Y. Lokhandwala, who is a student member of Indian Rationalist Association, is the son of Mr. Y.A. Lokhandwala who is the president of Bombay Rationalist Association. The error is regretted.

—EDITOR.

Why of Ramayathar?

Having come down to the earth, Vishnu experienced many troubles and tribulations. The reason therefore as adduced by the puranas is that Vishnu previously perpetrated many immoral and infamous acts and hence punishments were imposed on him and as a retaliatory measure by the curses of the Munis and Rishis whom he had wronged. Why was he cursed? He committed the sin of killing a woman, the wife of Brigu Muni. He resorted by illegal and deceptive means to impair the chastity of Jalandrasuran's wife. He intercoursed with his wife in broad day-light in an open space, perhaps to be spectacular!

Vishnu being a god how did he become a slave to passions like lewdness, the murder and all nefarious deeds?

NEWS AND NOTES

TROMBAY RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION.

The Trombay Rationalist Association conducted its annual day celebrations at Anushakti Nagar on February 19, 1978. Shri Hariharan Boonjar, who was the Chief Guest, gave an exposition of the historical and materialistic development of Rationalism. A hypnotic performance with a rationalistic inclination was conducted by the President of the Association, Shri Thangappan. A variety entertainment programme was also presented on this occasion.

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TOP SCIENTISTS FAIL TO FACE REALITIES

Annual Meet a Ritual—"Times of India" January 13, 1978.

Excerpts from L. K. Sharma's report on the 65th Session of the India Science held in Ahmedabad recently:

"Surprisingly the Congress failed to take note even of those trends which are likely to impede the advancement of Science. For example, Dr. Raja Ramanna in his presidential address at the anniversary meeting of the Indian National Science Academy warned about the strong hold of superstition and a non-scientific approach gaining ground. He also defined science's approach to miracles. The Science Congress did not even pick up the thread.

"Ironically, the Science Congress Session in Ahmedabad coincided with a grander "Religious" event in the city-Baba Jal Guru-dev's Yagna for ushering in the sat yug. Here the Baba was in direct communication with 33 Hindu devtas.

In the course of his many utterances, the Baba predicted a major calamity and spoke about his attempt to intervene with the angry of Gods to lessen its impact. He also advised farmers to take the Sabarmati sands to their fields to reap bumper crops.

Several Union Ministers, the State Chief Minister and some of his cabinet colleagues, the President of the state unit of the ruling party and several other dignitaries went to seek the Baba's blessings. A message sent from the Prime Minister's Office said that due to shortage of time, Mr. Desai would not be able to come to the yagna.

What did the Science Congress do then?

In a rare display of unanimity 24 recommendations on "Science Education and Rural Development" were passed in no time and the august body moved on to more important matters which included among other things: "Irregularities in the election to the chemistry section and in the issue of literature, unsatisfactory arrangements by the hosts and the failure of the office-bearers to supply the annual reports and accounts in advance".

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KARNATAKA RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION

At a meeting held on 15th January, 1978 the following members were re-elected to the Managing Committee. Prof. A. M. Dharma-lingam, President Mr. G. Sivapur, Vice-President, Mr. V.T. Rajashckara Shetty, Secretary, Mr. K. Muthuselvan, Treasurer. The names of the other members are Messrs Haneef Jawaid, A. C. Krishna, N. Jayaram, N. Ethiraj, Mr. and Mrs. M. Varadarajan, C. A. Abraham, Mr. S. G. Jayaram and Dr. R. Murlidhar. It was resolved to approach the

A.I.R to allot some time for the Association in its programmes.

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"HARE KRISHNA" ROBS HUNGRY INDIANS

By B. K. Tiwari

In the name of helping hungry Indians, leaders of Hare Krishna sect in West Germany collected DM 2.4 m. (about ninety lakh rupees) but sent to India DM 15,000 (Rs. 60,000) only, pocketing the rest for themselves.

Consequently, 10 members of the sect are being tried on charges of fraudulent begging and alleged cheating in London.

According to the prosecution, the sect had collected the funds from India-sympathisers in West Germany for hungry Indian children without the Government's permission. It did not even render any account to the Government which it should have in accordance with the law of the land.

A British national daily said "investigations culminated with a police raid on the sects' temples in Schloss Rettershof in the Taunus hills, near Frankfurt in December 1974 when 70 monks were detained. Two members allegedly escaped to Switzerland with large sums of money".

.. -INDIAN EXPRESS"
Bangalore.

Dated : 12th Dec. 1977

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RATIONALISTS SCARE MIRACLE-MONGER

Dr. Jadhav's bungalow is situated in Tilaknagar Housing complex in Nagpur-10. One night in November 1976, Dr. Jadhav narrated how from the tree trunk in his neighbourhood, turmeric powder and kumkum were dripping in the presence of devotees.

The Nagpur Rationalist Association immediately decided to investigate this so called supernatural phenomenon. Our discussion on this was a little loud.

We, including Dr. C. G. Pande, Dr. Koshkar and Dr. Jadhav went to the spot for verification on the 3rd day. But alas ! we were told that the dripping of turmeric powder and kumkum had stopped since the previous three days. It was also said that the Poojari of the tree trunk temple had a 'revelation' that the miracle would thereafter never happen.

.....P. K. Narayanan

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GUJARAT RATIONALIST JOURNAL

The Gujarat unit proposes to bring out a periodical 'Pragya'. They have invited articles in English or Gujarati. The inaugural issue is expected to be released during this summer.

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CRUELTY OF SUPERSTITION

A youth named Jagadeesan and his friend, K. S. Dasan were bitten by a mad dog. Dasan sought and obtained medical treatment and was cured. But Jagadeesan consulted a priest in the nearby temple. The priest, an exorcist, gave Bhasma, etc, to the youth. Sometime later he began to show symptoms of hydrophobia. He was rushed to the District Hospital but could not be saved.

V. Sarathkumar, Kadalundi.

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KERALA RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION

KRA has decided to launch a Dharna on 4th March 1978 in front of the 4 Radio stations in Kerala to protest against religious propaganda by Air.

The state committee in a resolution demanded the Government to order an enquiry in to the beastly attack on the Rationalist Sathyagrabhis at Guruvayoor on 26-12-77. Our readers are aware the rationalists were protesting against gold plating of the sanctum-sanctorum of Guruvayoor temple with 120 kgs. of purified gold. They also demanded that the surplus amount of Rs. 35 lakhs of Guruvayoor temple should be used for the uplift of the poor and that the Government should have effective control over the administration of worshipping centres.

There were 100 volunteers who took out a procession at 10 a.m. on 26-12-77 holding placards and shouting slogans. Later they sat near the Devaswom office peacefully while the General Secretary welcomed the gathering. A group of goondas assaulted Ms. U. Kalanathan, Pavanan, R. Krishnan kuttu Nair, V. P. purushothaman, M. B. K. and many others. The police were dispassionate onlookers.

In the meeting in Trichur, Mr. C. Ashutha Menon, former Chief Minister of Kerala, Father Veddakkan, Editor, 'Thozhilali' and others expressed their strong resentment against the incident.

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ROURKELA RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION

RRA held a conference on 21st January 78 deploring the inhuman attack on the rationalists by the believers at Guruvayoor.

They have suggested that the IRA implement the following :

1. Each IRA unit should have a body to investigate miracles.
2. Members should participate more actively in humanitarian work.
3. A directory of Indian Rationalists may be prepared and published to facilitate communication and co-ordination.

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MADHYA PRADESH RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION.

A group of four members donated blood to the Main Hospital at Bhilai Steel plant on 10th February 1978. The Chief Medical Officer congratulated the members appreciating their humanitarian outlook.

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GUJARAT ASSOCIATION.

Gujarat has become the target of Godmen. Last month a Saket yaga was performed when abuses were showered on the Prime Minister for refusing to attend the farce. The Gayatri yaga is now proposed on which a crore of rupees will be sent. A resolution has been passed warning the Gujarat people against this kind of exploitation.

In Ahmedabad a group of rationalists are putting up a heroic fight to arouse the public against such waste.

RAMA'S MANDINESS:

When Sita was to accompany him to the forest he desired her to stay back in the palace and act up to the sweet will of Bharatha and by that he said they could stand to gain much. At his Sita flew into a rage and cried out: "You are an impotent man! Not knowing that you are a woman in male's attire (eunuch) my father has given me in marriage to you. You talk like one who earns his livelihood by leading his wife to others". On hearing this he executed a somersault saying, "I wanted only to test your mental attitude".



The Sita Stereotype

By Margaret Bhatt

In the west woman is called Eve; in Hindu India she is Sita. Eve is vile because she tempted Adam to eat an apple and brought sin into the world. For this the early Christian Fathers heaped calumny upon her. Sita, however, is worse off. She is on a pedestal, a paragon of perfection, and the ultimate in womanly virtue. Paradoxically the legends of both women have been manipulated by men to enslave. The Christian belief declares women disgusting because of their sexuality. The Hindu denies them a sexual nature altogether. Neither position is true nor just.

In the Ramayana when women scheme, men must strive to be dutiful and do right. So Kaikeyi with her jealousy and lust for

power initiates the action by forcing Rama into exile. The other half of the epic concerns Sita's abduction which is brought about by the evil machinations of Shurpanaka who "conspired evil, she of the buck-teeth indenting her lip, the evil wretch." In legends ugliness in women is regarded as a sign of their malevolent nature. But Ravana, even as a Rakshasa, is described as handsome and godlike.

"The tale of Sita is a tale of womanly faith and self-abnegation. The creative imagination of the Hindus has conceived no loftier and holier character than Sita; the literature of the world has not produced a higher ideal of womanly love, womanly truth and womanly devotion", wrote Romesh Dutt.

Passive Women?

The italics are mine to show how passive qualities are wished upon women in male-oriented societies. The virtues they must cherish are inherent in the closed system in which they are held, and to be good is to be passive, obedient, tractable and totally subject to the male will.

In Kamban's Ramayana the first time Rama and Sita speak to each other is when he tells her of his banishment. In a commentary on Sita one writer says: "Even till very recently, and now too, in many Hindu homes the young wife is neither seen nor heard." And again: "Sita stands as the ideal to all Hindu India for that speechless wifely love of immeasurable depth."

Killing at Electronic Speed

Ram, the hero of the epic, singly kills 14,000 Rakshasas of dreaded deeds within a short period of nearly 24 minutes.

SENSELESS EXAGGERATION

Hanuman jumps over the sea which is no less than 800 miles in breadth. At the command of Sugriva, billions and trillions of monkeys soon became collected at Kishkindha.

Where else could one find such a forthright denial of personhood to woman? It is this kind of subjugation that is responsible for the maliciousness that so often vitiates Indian domestic life making daughters-in-law victims. Romantic poetry is one thing, but to know the reality one has only to read the daily reports in our papers of "accidents" and "suicides" by burning stoves. Tragically, none of these Sitas have the benefit of a poet's fancy to save them from the flames.

Piety needs no intelligence

To be pious, faithful and good demands no great intelligence and in the best tradition of self-denial Sita utters her own indictment in Valmiki's *Ramayana* when she demands her right to accompany Rama into exile:

"Car and steed and gilded palace, vain are these to woman's life. Dearer is her husband's shadow to the loved and loving wife! For my mother often taught me and my father often spoke. That her home the wedded woman doth beside her husband make. As the shadow to the substance, to her lord the faithful wife. And she parts not from her consort till she parts with fleeting life!"

He all, she nothing?

Admirable sentiments, nobly expressed for if marriage is not a bond of such utter

commitment, then it is not marriage. But only if the woman believes herself a "shadow" only if she sees herself as derived from her husband, as Eve was shaped of Adam's rib a secondary thing, without proof of any identity except what she can claim through her Lord. Only if unequalness prevails, he all and she nothing. But not if she has used her mind to become a nuclear physicist, an I.A.S. officer, a commercial pilot or a High Court Judge.

However, to most other women, who like Sita see themselves as "shadows" no choice is offered in directing their own destinies. If marriage proves intolerable, they are advised to endure it. If they reject it, their parents turn from them, society condemns them as flawed, and being women they cannot even hope to obtain full justice through the law. They are shadows and there is no substance to their claim to happiness or self-determination. They expected to suffer after the example set by Sita and they gain merit by remaining "Gems of Constancy and Chastity".

In proving that it can be done Sita set an example for all subsequent cinematic heroines, too. Kamini's Sita agonises through twenty stanzas they in turn take up a good few reels with a number of heart-rending songs thrown in for good measure, and having passed all tests of their constancy

THE PERIOD OF RAMAYANA

Mr B. B. Lal, former Director General of Archaeological Survey of India and at present the Head of Archaeological School of Shivaji University, Gwalior, after conducting a long term research campaign on the sites pertaining to the *Ramayana*, especially Ayodhya, the birth place of Ram, publically declared that Ayodhya was not in existence before 800 B.C. He challenged all those who could not accept his findings as true to go with him to the place where he would test the earthen pots scientifically in front of anyone.

Internal evidence shows the epic belonged to 2nd or 3rd century A.D.

The epic tells that it belongs to the Dvapara period, i.e. to a period thousands of years prior to B.C., whereas in the light of Archaeological evidence it cannot be proved to belong to a period prior to B.C. 600. In the epic the weapons made of iron are referred to which could not be prior to B.C. 600 when such weapons were first used.

with flying colours, are finally rewarded with beatitude.

Constancy Test

Not a single man in the audience would want to see it happen otherwise. For the truth is that the Ramayana is not so much a test of woman's constancy as a vindication of a husband's right to insist on that constancy. Rama's jealous suspicion is all of a piece with this system of values. When he arrives in Lanka and confronts Sita he asks how she "stayed content one year in capital of Rakshasas' of evil walk of life. With what design have you returned, unabashed? That I should cherish you?"

He says he fought to retrieve his honour, not her. The doubts he expresses of her chastity fit in with men's belief that women lack strength of character to keep their own virtue, and when left unprotected, they succumb. As a result few Indian men learn to feel decently about genuine, platonic yet warm friendships with women. Girls who mix freely and without a suitable show of false modesty are regarded as fast, and the apparent freedom with which western women walk and talk suggests decadence to narrow Indian thinking.

Sita as victim

Sita's predicament here is something all Indian women live with, be they Hindu, Muslim, Christian, or any other. Malicious talk and slander is characteristic of our society, and sadly enough women themselves contribute to this denigration in no small measure. "For she dwelt in Ravana's dwelling—rumour clouds a woman's fame," says the text. "Dearer than a dark suspicion to a woman is her death." "Funeral flame dispels suspicion, honour lives when woman dies!" Jauhar and self-immolation was the reply forced upon women to satisfy male standards of personal honour. And in this respect Sita was the first victim.

Reject male egotism!

It is only towards the end of the epic that Sita really turns admirable—and how eloquent she can be in her impassioned moments! In her refusal to undergo a second test by fire to satisfy Rama she acquires real stature and credibility. It is more than her self-esteem can take, and for the first time she rejects outright her role as victim to male egotism. Only by a similar rejection can Indian women today hope to achieve self-determination, and establish as valid their claim to personhood without reference to out-moded convention and ancient mythology.

Hindus' sense of History

K.M. Panikkar tells us, "Hindus as a people attached no importance to Historical and biographical writing, resulting in an almost complete absence of historical literature in Sanskrit and other Indian languages."

"Regular dynastic Histories begin only with the Muslims who established their rule in North India in the 13th century. But these chronicles also deal only with limited dynastic wars and domestic revolution and are overlaid with religious fanaticism and prejudice".

Dr. Kovoor Octogenary Souvenir

Edited by B. Premanand

This Souvenir is published as a tribute to Dr. Abraham Kovoor on the occasion of his eightieth birthday and it is a book which all rationalists will find of interest. Not only does it give us a personal portrait of this remarkable man, it also provides other thought-provoking reading on topics of relevance to the rationalist cause.

Readers of FREETHOUGHT are familiar with Dr. Kovoor's writings and already know something of his background. It is always interesting to find how often it is those from very orthodox and religious backgrounds who in time become the most articulate rebels. To quote Charles T. Gornham on Ingersoll from Pavanan's article "Kovoor, The Infidel": "So many Freethinkers have been the sons of clergymen that there is probably a law of nature by which theology carries its retribution in its own bosom."

Model to Indian women

Accounts of Dr. Kovoor's family background and life include interesting photographs of himself, his unusual wife Accamma (who ought to serve as a model to Indian women in her rationalism), his son Aries, and many other eminent rationalists who have had the privilege of being associated with Dr. Kovoor's work in India.

The Souvenir includes personal testimonies from people who were privileged to be Dr. Kovoor's students, and those he helped in an unusual manner in coping with severe psychological problems arising from religious superstition. There is also an account by Dr. Kovoor himself "On Looking Back" in which with his usual fine humour he tells of some of the incidents that shaped his life.

"Universal man"

The man who emerges as a man of many parts—a universal man—an intellectual with a truly scientific outlook. A man whose simple dignity is indicative of his purity of intent. A man who has that rare insight and intuition to recognise fraud where he discerns it along with the courage to expose it no matter what opposition he might face. But above all, a man with that sense of humanity which transcends all man-made barriers of creed, caste and community, guided always by the clear light of reason.

The book also includes a review by M.G. Radhakrishnan of Dr. Kovoor's book *Begone Godmen* published by Jaico in India which received considerable publicity from its reviews in the national press. Also included is the miracle exposure campaign and the continuing battle against godmen—two causes to which the IRA has devoted much attention. In addition there are erudite and thoughtful essays on subjects such as "Man Created God and Religion" by G. Viswanathan, "An Exploration into The Rational Space" by A. P. Jayaraman, "The Attitude of a Scientist Towards Miracles" by Dr. M. Ramanadham, and a thought-provoking article on a topic of endless interest to Indian rationalists: "Secular State—The Problem of Definition" by Prof. A. S. Pataskar.

I found this Souvenir of enormous interest. It is attractively and neatly printed and obviously a labour of love into which the Editor, Compiler and members of the Souvenir Committee have put a great deal of time and effort. I commend it to you.

TEST FOR REASON NO.6

On a train, Smith, Robinson and Jones are the fireman, guard and engine driver, but NOT respectively. Also aboard the train are three businessmen who have the same names Mr. Smith, Mr. Robinson and Mr. Jones.

1. Mr. Robinson lives in Manchester.
2. The guard lives exactly half-way between London and Manchester.
3. Mr. Jones earns exactly £ 4000 a year.
4. The guard's nearest neighbour, one of the passengers, earns exactly seven times as much as the guard.
5. Smith beats the fireman at snooker.
6. The passenger whose name is the same as the guard's lives in London.

Who is the Engine Driver?

RULES .

1. The entries should be received on or before 25-1-78.
2. There is a prize of Rs. 10 in the form of books to be sent to the winner. If there are more than one correct entry, the prize will be decided on lots.
3. Readers are requested to quote their Membership number or subscription number.

The following have sent correct solution for " Test for Reason No. 4 "

1. Mr. Nelson Gomez, Cochin

2. Mr. P. V. Jayaprakash, Bandra
3. Mr. T. P. Kunhiraman, Kerala
4. Mr. R. Lakshminarayanan, Bangalore.
5. Mr. G. R. Menon, Ahmedabad.
6. Mr. K. Muralikrishna, Eluru.
7. Mr. J. Ravindranath Singh, Madras.
8. Mr. B. Suresh Kumar, Bombay.
9. Ms. B. Vimala, Repalle.

Mr. G. R. Menon, Ahmedabad gets the prize in the draw.

Solution for Test No. 5

Though the frequency for both the route nos. 23 and 25 is 30 minutes, the buses on route no. 23 come to that particular stop 2 minutes after the buses on route no. 25 leave the place. For example, the buses on route no. 25 come to that particular bus stop at say 4 p.m., 4-30 p.m., 5 p.m., 5-30 p.m. and so on while buses on route no. 23 come there at 4-02 p.m., 4-32 p.m., 5-02 p.m., 5-32 p.m. and so on. Mr. Sivarama Iyer would be able to catch bus no. 23 only if he is able to come to the bus stop during the 2 minutes interval between the departure of bus no. 25 and arrival of bus no. 23. On the other hand he will be able to get bus no. 25 at any time during the 28 minutes interval between the departure of bus no. 23 and arrival of bus no. 25. Thus out of 365 days, he was able to get bus no. 25 on 340 occasions and statistically he was able to get bus no. 23 on 1/15th on 365 days, i.e. 24.3 days or say 25 days. The number of visits he made to Siva and Vishnu temples was only proportionate to the time for which he had to wait for each of these buses.

The names of the winners will be published in the next issue.

For more detailed true versions of 'Ramayana' Please read the following books :

- English :** A true Reading of Ramayana by Periyar EVR
My study of Ramayana by P. H. Gupta
Hindu Epics- Historic or Imaginary by Prof. Surindera Ajaat
- Tamil :** Ramayana Pattirangal by Periyar E. V. R.
Ramayana Natakam by Thiruvarur Thangaraj
Kamba Rasam by C. N. Annadurai
- Telugu :** Ramayana Rahasyalu by Kotha Satyanarayana Choudary
Ramayana Visha Vriksham (3 volumes) by Muppala Ranganayakamma
Jabali by Narla Venkateswara Rao
Satyakama Jabali by C. V.
Sambuka Vadha by Tripuraneni Ramaswamy Choudhary
Ramayana Visteshamulu by Suravaram Pratapa Reddy
Asokam by Muddukrishna
Seetha Agni Pravesam by Chalam
- Bengali** Larbavathone Sutra

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I, C. A. Seshadri, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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(C. A. SESHADRI)
Signature of Publishers.

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